

The University of Georgia
School of Public and International Affairs
Department of Political Science

POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government

Fall Semester 2020

Instructor: Professor Alexa Bankert

Contact: alexa.bankert@uga.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description and Objective

This course is important – whether you are a Political Science major or not. You will be introduced to the fundamentals of the American government, such as its political institutions and main actors. Most importantly, this class aims to demonstrate how you are connected to the government in your daily life and present you with tools to become informed and act in politically meaningful ways. For this purpose, we will also examine what being American means in today’s society and how our political institutions and behavior compare to other countries. By doing so, you gain a better understanding of how specific features of the American system shape politics. Ultimately, you will leave this class with a comprehensive understanding of how to critically evaluate and actively participate in the American political system.

COVID-19 Related Adjustments to the Class Format

This class consists of a biweekly lecture (Mondays/Wednesdays) as well as a breakout session guided by a teaching assistant on Fridays. The lectures will be posted online every Monday and Wednesday while the breakout session will take place in-person. However, attendance is not mandatory and your teaching assistant will post the content of the breakout session online. All quizzes, exams, and assignments will be completed online. All class materials can be accessed via eLC and will be delivered asynchronously. If you decide to attend the in-person breakout section, you are required to wear a face mask throughout the class and to maintain social distancing procedures. Please note that all breakout sessions move completely online after Thanksgiving Break.

Feeling Lost?

I will strive to make sure that the course is understandable and that assignments and exams are manageable. **If you have any questions about the course content, structure, or lectures, please do not hesitate to contact your me. If you have any questions about grades, assignments, papers, eLC, and InQuizitive, please contact your TA.** This is especially important due to the online delivery of our material. If you email me before 5pm, you can expect an answer on the same day. If you email me after 5pm, I will get back to you first thing in the morning.

Required Text and Technology

We the People (12th essentials edition) – by Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Robert J. Spitzer **with access to InQuizitive**

Georgia Politics in a State of Change (4th custom edition for the University of Georgia) – by Charles S. Bullock III and Ronald Keith Gaddie

******Please do not buy this book until after the first breakout session******

You are also required to create a *Top Hat account* (it's for free). If you already have one from a prior class, you won't need to create a new one. If you do not have an account yet, please go to <https://support.tophat.com/s/article/Student-Top-Hat-Overview-and-Getting-Started-Guide> for instructions on how to get started with Top Hat. The join code for this class is **072408**.

Sections

You are expected to watch the online lectures on Mondays and Wednesdays as well as join a breakout session- either in-person OR online. All in-person sections take place on Fridays. If you decide to join the breakout sections online, all content will be posted online on Fridays. **Please note that there won't be any in-person breakout session after Thanksgiving Break. All breakout sessions will move online after Thanksgiving.**

| Sect. | Time | Place | Instructor | Email |
|-------|-------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|
| 10920 | 8:00-8:50 | Journalism 507 | Jon Christian | jon.christian@uga.edu |
| 10922 | 9:10-10:00 | Journalism 507 | Jon Christian | jon.christian@uga.edu |
| 10928 | 9:10-10:00 | Journalism 515 | Jeff Hannon | jeffery.hannon@uga.edu |
| 10919 | 10:20-11:10 | Journalism 515 | Jeff Hannon | jeffery.hannon@uga.edu |
| 10925 | 10:20-11:10 | Journalism 516 | Langston Leake | langston97@uga.edu |
| 10918 | 11:30-12:20 | Journalism 511 | Langston Leake | langston97@uga.edu |
| 10937 | 11:30-12:20 | Journalism 516 | Mary Hunt | mary.hunt25@uga.edu |
| 10923 | 12:40-1:30 | Journalism 511 | Mary Hunt | mary.hunt25@uga.edu |
| 10924 | 12:40-1:30 | Journalism 515 | Jake Truscott | jake.truscott@uga.edu |
| 10926 | 1:50-2:40 | Psychology 309 | Jake Truscott | jake.truscott@uga.edu |
| 10927 | 1:50-2:40 | Journalism 515 | Benton Sample | bwsample@uga.edu |

Evaluation

Response Paper: You will complete **one** short paper in this course. Topics are listed in the syllabus and match each week's theme. Please make sure to stick with the paper prompt and to rely on factual information and authoritative sources when crafting your argument. Note that the due date of the paper varies according to the topic you choose. Short papers can range from 5 to 10 pages (double spaced) and are due at 5pm on Mondays the following week (see deadlines in the course schedule). Please make sure to discuss the criteria of the paper with your TA in advance. You can submit a draft of your paper to your TA for review. This draft must be submitted by Wednesday 5pm to get feedback by Friday.

Midterm: The midterm will primarily consist of multiple-choice questions with varying levels of difficulty. These questions will cover material from the first half of the semester. *As of now, the midterm exam is scheduled for Wednesday, October 14th. The exam will be available from 12pm – 3pm. If you are in a different time zone, please email me and I will adjust your exam time.*

Final Exam: The final exam is **not** cumulative and will primarily consist of multiple-choice questions with varying levels of difficulty. *As of now, the final exam is scheduled for Monday, December 9th, 9am – 12pm. If you are in a different time zone, please email me and I will adjust your exam time.*

Weekly Assignments: There will be short weekly assignments which you can access on the **InQuizitive** website that accompanies your textbook (you can find their website here: <https://digital.wwnorton.com/wethepeople12ess>) You will need to create an account in order to submit your assignments, **which are due every Friday at 6pm of each week.**

When you create your InQuizitive account, you will be asked for a Student Set ID, which is linked to the section you chose when you registered for this class. The set IDs and their corresponding breakout sections are listed below. If you have trouble with the registration process, please contact your TA.

Student Set ID is **269012** for section 10920 from 8:00am to 8:50am (TA Jon Christian)

Student Set ID is **269013** for section 10922 from 9:05 to 9:55am (TA Jon Christian)

Student Set ID is **269029** for section 10928 from 9:05 to 9:55am (TA Jeff Hannon)

Student Set ID is **269030** for section 10919 from 10:10am to 11am (TA Jeff Hannon)

Student Set ID is **269035** for section 10925 from 10:10am to 11am (TA Langston Leake)

Student Set ID is **269037** for section 10918 from 11:15am to 12:05pm (TA Langston Leake)

Student Set ID is **269046** for section 10937 from 11:15am to 12:05pm (TA Mary Hunt)

Student Set ID is **269047** for section 10923 from 12:20pm to 1:10pm (TA Mary Hunt)

Student Set ID is **269052** for section 10924 from 12:20pm to 1:10pm (TA Jake Truscott)

Student Set ID is **269053** for section 10926 from 1:25pm to 2:15pm (TA Jake Truscott)

Student Set ID is **269054** for section 10927 from 1:25pm to 2:15pm (TA Benton Sample)

Readings and Quizzes: The required readings typically include one chapter of the textbook per week. If any additional readings are assigned they will be made available electronically on eLC. It is important that you stay current with these readings so that you can follow along with lectures and participate in discussions in your sections. I would strongly recommend you finish the readings before you complete any assignments. There will also be short quizzes (3-5 questions) based on the lectures and assigned readings for

that week so make sure you are familiar with each chapter's key terms.

In-Section Participation: There will be group discussions (in-person and/or online) that should demonstrate your critical reflection on the material covered in class as well as on the weekly assignments.

Online Research Study: You are required to participate in two online surveys that we will use to learn about political science research. The first survey link will be distributed by the end of September. The second survey link will be distributed by the end of November. Both surveys will take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete.

Grading Breakdown by Percentage:

Final Exam: 20%

Midterm: 20%

Response Paper: 15%

Quizzes: 15%

Weekly InQuizitive Assignments: 15%

Participation in Section Discussions (online OR in-person): 10%

Participation in Online Research Study: 5%

Grading Scale for Final Semester Grades

| | | |
|----------|----------|----------|
| 100-94 A | 79-77 C+ | 63-60 D- |
| 93-90 A- | 76-74 C | 59-0 F |
| 89-87 B+ | 73-70 C- | |
| 86-84 B | 69-67 D+ | |
| 83-80 B- | 66-64 D | |

Please note that there is no standard rounding policy. Rounding decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis and are largely determined by your TA.

Grade Appeals, Incompletes, Late Assignments, and Make-Up Policy

Any questions you have regarding grades should be directed to your teaching assistant. If you are unable to resolve the matter with him or her, you may appeal the grade to me. Keep in mind that formal grade appeals must be made in writing, and in the case of a paper, I will re-grade your entire paper. Therefore, your grade can go up or down. A final grade of "Incomplete" will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. If an incomplete is given, it is the student's responsibility to complete the necessary requirements as early in the following semester as possible. Legitimate excuses for absence from an exam (e.g., religious holiday, medical emergency, or illness) must be presented to the teaching assistant and accepted prior to the exam when feasible. Late assignments will be docked 5 percent per day (half letter grade), for each day that a project is late (including weekends). If you need a (reasonable) extension, talk to your teaching assistant.

Office Hours

Students who are having difficulty with the course materials and/or assignments are

encouraged to contact their teaching assistant. Don't be afraid to schedule a Zoom meeting with them. However, please note that these online office hours are for clarification of material, not for recreating a lecture or asking *extremely* detailed questions about the quizzes or the exam (i.e. "Will this be on the exam?"). If you like to talk to me, feel free to make an appointment via email.

Syllabus Policy:

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus if necessary. I will give you fair notice (at least a week) if something, such as a reading assignment, is to change.

Disability Resource Center

If you anticipate needing accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with the Disability Resource Center. Additional information can be found here: <http://drc.uga.edu/>

Withdrawal Policy

Undergraduate students can only withdraw from four courses and receive a withdrawal-passing (WP) grade while enrolled at the University. Students can drop any class without penalty during the drop/add period at the beginning of every semester. Dropped courses during the drop/add period do not qualify as withdrawals. Instructors have the ability to withdraw a student from the class due to excessive absences (see course attendance policy). Please review the policy here:

<https://reg.uga.edu/general-information/policies/withdrawals/>

Culture of Honesty Policy

You are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures relating to academic honesty. To understand what constitutes dishonest work, as defined by the University, please carefully review the policy here:

https://honesty.uga.edu/_resources/documents/academic_honesty_policy_2017.pdf

COVID-19 Safety Procedures

Face coverings. Face coverings in public spaces, including classrooms, are mandatory for all. Wearing a face covering is in addition to and not a substitute for also maintaining six feet social distancing. Anyone not using a face covering when required will be asked to wear one or must leave the area.

Keeping a safe distance. Please maintain six feet between you and others. The seating capacity in your classroom has been modified to allow for social distancing. Please sit in designated, marked seats. In all public spaces, including classrooms, you should not remove signage or re-arrange furniture, even if it appears that furniture is not being used. To help maintain distance, please keep right, where possible.

Don't congregate. If you want to spend some time chatting with someone, please take it outside or online. We are also requesting that you enter and exit any building without delay, staying outside of the building as long as practicable before your class begins and then

leaving once your class is finished.

Keeping it clean. Cleaning and disinfecting of public spaces are important to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Classrooms are only being cleaned once-per-day. There are sanitation wipes/buckets and stands in proximity to your classroom. Prior to heading in to class, you should take a wipe from the station and wipe down all high-touch surfaces associated with your seat. You should help further slow the spread of the virus by frequently washing your hands.

Your health. You have been provided with a digital thermometer and are required to self-monitor for signs or symptoms of COVID-19. By coming to campus, you are acknowledging that you have checked, and do not have, symptoms of COVID-19. UGA is using a notification application to remind you daily to check for symptoms prior to coming to campus and self-report in the event you display COVID-19 symptoms. If you report symptoms, the University follows a confidential process for securely notifying health officials who can begin contact tracing and provide appropriate support services. If you have an underlying medical condition or, for any reason, believe that you are at a high risk of developing a serious case of COVID-19, you may request an accommodation through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at drc@uga.edu or 706-542-8719. More information can be found at - https://drc.uga.edu/content_page/student-accommodation-guidelines

Check your email regularly so you don't miss important information, and also check the University COVID-19 website for updates and resources, this web site includes links from student affairs with helpful, up-to-date messages for students and parents.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources. If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

- UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).
- If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.
- Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

Course Schedule

*****No breakout session on Friday, August 21st*****

First Week (starting August 24th)

Topic: The Citizen and the Government

Readings: Chapter 1 in “We The People” & Dudley Poston and Rogelio Sáenz, “[The U.S. White Majority Will Soon Disappear Forever](#)”

Second Week (starting August 31st)

Topic: The Founding and the Constitution

Readings: Chapter 2 in “We The People” & The Constitution of the United States of America pp. A11-A23.

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 1 and 2 on *Inquizitive*

Third Week (starting September 9th)

*****No lecture on Monday, September 7th due to Labor Day*****

Topic: Federalism

Readings: Chapter 3 in “We The People” & Jennifer Selin, “[Trump versus the States](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 3 on *Inquizitive*

Short Paper Topic: Think about the COVID-19 crisis which has put states’ power in contention with national power. Write out your stance on whether the pandemic response should be addressed at the national or state level. Justify your decision. (Due: September 14th)

Fourth Week (starting September 14th)

Topic: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Readings: Chapter 4 in “We The People” & listen to Terry Gross “[A 'Forgotten History' Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 4 on *Inquizitive*

Short Paper Topic: Imagine you are a legislative staffer. Draft a policy memo on the impact of COVID-19 on existing racial discrepancies in American society (e.g. education, income, health, etc.). How can the government address these discrepancies? Justify your decision. (Due: September 21st)

Fifth Week (starting September 21st)

Topic: Public Opinion

Readings: Chapter 5 in “We The People” & Nate Cohn and Kevin Quealy “[How Public Opinion Has Moved on Black Lives Matter](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 5 on *Inquizitive*

Short Paper Topic: Take the Political Compass test at www.politicalcompass.org or the Pew Research Center’s political typology quiz at www.people-press.org. These sites rate your political ideology based on your opinions. Can ideology help you to guide your political opinions or should your political opinions guide your ideology? Discuss. (Due: September 28th)

Sixth Week (starting September 28th)

Topic: The Media

Readings: Chapter 6 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 6 on *Inquizitive*

Short Paper Topic: Pick a current political topic and compare how it is reported on one of the national news (ABC, CBS, or NBC), one of the cable news (CNN, MSNBC, or FOX NEWS), and one newspaper (New York Times, Wall Street Journal, or The Washington Post). Identify the different frames and describe their impact. (Due: October 5th)

Seventh Week (starting October 5th)

Topic: Political Parties, Participation, and Elections

Readings: Chapter 7 in “We The People” & Kwame Anthony Appiah, “[People Don’t Vote for What They Want; They Vote for Who They Are](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 7 on *Inquizitive*

Short Paper Topic: Watch [this video](#) on voter suppression in Georgia. Why is turnout so much lower among Americans of color? Examine the role of institutional barriers in your answer and propose possible strategies to increase turnout for all Americans. (Due: October 12th)

Eighth Week (starting October 12th)

*****Midterm exam on Wednesday, October 14th*****

Topic: Interest Groups

Readings: Chapter 8 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 8 on *Inquizitive*

Short Paper Topic: Read [this article on Citizen United](#). Imagine you are an aide to a member of Congress. Write a policy memo outlining how the U.S. campaign finance system differs from the European one. You can choose which European country you want to focus on (Due: October 19th).

Ninth Week (starting October 19th)

Topic: Congress

Readings: Chapter 9 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 9 on *Inquizitive*

Short Paper Topic: Look up your representative’s recent voting records and ideological placement (<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes>). Make a list of five issues he or she voted on, and state whether you would have voted the same way **on behalf of your district taking into account your district’s economic and socio-economic characteristics**. Justify your decisions. (Due: October 26th)

Tenth Week (starting October 26th)

Topic: The Presidency

Readings: Chapter 10 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 10 on *Inquizitive*

Short Paper Topic: Consider President Trump’s travel ban. Explain why you think the president should or should not have the power to act on this issue. In your answer, discuss the reaction of the international community to the travel ban as well as its impact on America’s image abroad. (Due: November 2nd)

Eleventh Week (starting November 2nd)

*****No breakout session on Friday, November 6th, due to Fall Break*****

Topic: ELECTIONS WEEK!

Readings: TBD

Weekly Online Assignment: TBD

Twelfth Week (starting November 9th)

Topic: The Bureaucracy (it is not going to be as boring as it sounds)

Readings: Chapter 11 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 11 on *Inquizitive*

Short Paper Topic: Read Dan Balz “[Crisis exposes how America has hollowed out its government](#)”. Why did the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic differ so much from the European one? What is the role of the bureaucracy in times of crisis? (Due: November 16th)

Thirteenth Week (starting November 16th)

Topic: The Federal Courts

Readings: Chapter 12 in “We The People” & Louis Menand, “[The Supreme Court Case that Enshrined White Supremacy into Law](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 12 on *Inquizitive*

Short Paper Topic: Read Alvin Chang “[Brett Kavanaugh and the Supreme Court’s shift to the right](#).” How has SCOTUS changed after the confirmation of Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh? Then consider SCOTUS cases such as *Trump vs. NAACP* or *June Medical Services v. Gee*. Why would conservative judges side with liberal judges (or vice versa)? (Due: November 23rd)

Fourteenth Week (November 23rd) *Thanksgiving Break 25th - 27th*****

Topic: Domestic Policy

Readings: Chapter 13 in “We The People” & Eyal Press “[A Preventable Cancer Is on the Rise in Alabama](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 13 on *Inquizitive*

Short Paper Topic: Describe the level of income inequality in the U.S. and compare it to other countries (<https://data.oecd.org/inequality/income-inequality.htm>). Why should or should we not care about income inequality? What are the consequences of income inequality on society and the economy? Justify your answer. (Due: November 30th)

*****CLASSES MOVE COMPLETELY ONLINE AFTER THANKSGIVING BREAK*****

Fifteenth Week (starting November 30th)

Topic: Foreign Policy

Readings: Chapter 14 in “We The People” & Keith Johnson “[U.S. Effort to Depart WTO Gathers Momentum](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 14 on *Inquizitive*

Short Paper Topic: Why should Americans care about foreign policy? Are isolationism and

protectionism possible in today's world? In your answer, describe the role of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization in a globalized world order. (Due: December 7th)

Sixteenth Week (starting December 7th)

Topic: Final Exam Review